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Senate

The Senate met at 10:45 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BEN SASSE, a Senator from the State of Nebraska.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Beautiful Savior, You have been our dwelling place in all generations, sustaining us with Your steadfast love.

Today, surround our Senators with the shield of Your divine favor, enabling them to obey Your command to be fruitful and productive. Teach them to obey Your precepts, doing Your good will, as they find joy in Your presence. Lord, keep them from doing those things that could bring them regret, remorse, and shame. Renew their strength as You give them the courage to carry on in these challenging days. Guard them from error, save them from false judgments, and deliver them from evil.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 24, 2017.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable BEN SASSE, a Senator from the State of Nebraska, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. SASSE thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

DIALOGUE WITH THE PRESIDENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, leaders from both parties had an opportunity to meet with President Trump and Vice President PENCE at the White House. We appreciate their time and look forward to more conversations with them in the days to come, including later today.

The President has invited the Democratic leader, the chairman and ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, and me to the White House this afternoon to meet with him regarding the Supreme Court vacancy as part of his ongoing consultations with Members of the Senate. I appreciate the President soliciting our advice on this important matter.

Later this week, Republicans in both the Senate and House will have another opportunity to engage with the President as we gather for our issues conference in Philadelphia. I know we are all eager to continue the dialogue about moving our legislative agenda, including priorities like bringing relief from the consequences of ObamaCare, confirming the President's nominees, enacting tax reform, easing the regulatory burden on our economy, and other key issues.

We are also looking forward to hearing from another special guest, British Prime Minister Theresa May. Her visit will provide Members the chance to

hear from the leader of one of our closest allies and partners. We appreciate her willingness to join us, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss the ways in which we can continue to strengthen our Nations' close relationship and pursue shared interests in the years ahead.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CAMPAIGN PROMISES OF PRESIDENT TRUMP

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, according to President Trump's words, yesterday—not Friday—was his first official day in office. It is an important distinction because throughout the campaign, President Trump made numerous promises about what he would do on his first day. So we went through them. Turns out he made upwards of 30 promises of Executive actions or plans that he would announce on day 1. This didn't require any congressional approval; he could just announce it. Even by a generous count, the President fulfilled only two or three of them. Let me mention just a few of the important omissions.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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The President campaigned against both establishments, promising to oppose elites and the powerful in Washington, “to drain the swamp.” He campaigned against the Democratic establishment, but he also campaigned against the Republican establishment. As a result, he explicitly promised to introduce an 18-point plan for ethics reform on day 1. How did he do on that? He promised to sign a 5-year ban on lobbying after officials worked in Congress or the White House, but he did not deliver. He promised to institute a lifetime ban on White House officials from lobbying on behalf of a foreign government, but he did not deliver. He promised to put in place a complete ban on foreign lobbyists raising money for American elections, but again he did not deliver.

On day 1, did President Trump fulfill his pledge to bring ethics reform to Washington? No. In fact, looking at his “swamp Cabinet”—stacked with billionaires and bankers with myriad conflicts of interests—he may have already lowered the ethical standards in our government.

On trade—this is an issue where I am probably closer to the views of the President’s than I was to either President Obama’s or President Bush’s, but it seems President Trump is again failing to deliver on his day 1 promises. He promised over and over again—it was one of the few things he said in the campaign I really liked. He said he was going to label China a currency manipulator on his first day. But he did not deliver. Instead, he issued an Executive action withdrawing from the TPP.

Everyone knew the TPP was dead in the water a month or two ago. Leader MCCONNELL would not bring it up on the floor of the Senate because he did not have the votes. Furthermore, saying we won’t do TPP, which is not in effect anyway, isn’t creating a single new job.

So there is something else he could have done—his promise: On day 1, label China a currency manipulator. China is propping up their currency at the moment. They do whatever is best for China even if it hurts American jobs and American workers over and over again. You can be sure they will continue manipulating their currency when it is in their best interest to do so. You can be sure, even when they move up the currency, they are manipulating it.

Guess who I worked with on the issue of currency manipulation. Attorney General nominee, then-Senator JEFF SESSIONS. He and I were partners in this, and many others. On our side, Senator BROWN and Senator STABENOW were allies. On their side, Senator GRAHAM and Senator COLLINS were allies. It was a broad bipartisan coalition. And we were opposed, frankly, by both President Bush and President Obama. But here we have President Trump. He promised to label China a currency manipulator on his first day in office. We are still waiting.

Last night at the White House, I mentioned this to the President. He didn’t say no. I am not going to say what he said. He didn’t say no. Maybe he will do it. I hope and pray he does. We await real action on trade, one of the President’s signature issues. It is another promise not fulfilled.

There are many promises President Trump made during the campaign that we are glad he is not keeping, to be honest with you, but the bottom line is, there is a giant gulf between what the President says he is going to do and what he actually does. His rhetoric does not match reality. That is becoming clearer each day. Just look at what happened on Friday, inauguration day, which perfectly sums up my point. The President gave an inaugural address arguing that for too long Washington has reaped the rewards of government, while the people have suffered. Then, an hour later, the President took an Executive action that made it harder for Americans to afford a mortgage, even though Washington could certainly have afforded to give them a tax break. We are seeing a pattern emerge. President Trump is using populist rhetoric to cover up a hard-right agenda.

In short, actions speak louder than words. If day 1 is any indication, the grandiose promises this President made to the working men and women of America seem to be just a hall of mirrors.

I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FLAKE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with Senator ALEXANDER to be recognized for up to 15 minutes, followed by 30 minutes controlled by the Democrats.

The Senator from Tennessee.

NOMINATION OF BETSY DEVOS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, Democratic Senators are searching for a valid reason to oppose the President’s nomination of Betsy DeVos to be U.S. Education Secretary because they really don’t want Americans to know what

their real reason is. Here is the real reason: Betsy DeVos has spent the last 30 years—actually more than 30 years—being dedicated to helping low-income children in America have more of the same choices of schools that wealthy Americans already have.

Specifically, the Democrats object to the fact that Betsy DeVos supports the idea of tax dollars following low-income children to the school that their parents may choose—public, private, or religious. This is not a new or subversive idea. Let us go back to 1944, the GI bill for veterans. The Congress enacted probably the most successful piece of social legislation ever enacted when it passed the GI bill for veterans. As a result, veterans came home from World War II and Federal tax dollars followed them to the accredited college or university of their choice.

They could go to Notre Dame. They could go to the University of Arizona. They could go to Nashville Auto Diesel College, the University of Tennessee. It did not matter. It was their choice. That is when Americans experience with education vouchers began. I have always wondered, why would an idea that helped to create the “greatest generation”—which is what we call the World War II generation—that helped to create the best colleges and universities in the world, why would that be such a dangerous idea to use for our schools?

The idea of education vouchers following students to the college of their choice has been continued in higher education. Pell grants—we spend about \$30 billion in Pell grants every year, up to \$6,000, that follow lower income students to the community college or college of their choice. Those are education vouchers.

We have almost \$100 billion of new student loans every year. How do we spend that money? We allow that money to follow the college students to the college of their choice. Those are education vouchers. Starting with the GI bill for veterans, all the way through Pell grants, all the way through student loans, we all endorse those ideas, saying it creates great opportunity for children. It has been so successful. I have not heard any Senator in this body stand up and say: Well, let’s cancel the Pell grants because it is tax money following students to a college. Let’s cancel \$100 billion in student loans this year because it means tax dollars following someone to Harvard or to Notre Dame or to Yeshiva.

No one is going to say that. Then why do they get so exercised about that when it has to do with our schools? In addition to that, Mrs. DeVos has testified before our committee that she does not favor—as much as she supports the idea of giving parents choices with schools—she does not favor Washington, DC, telling Arizona or Tennessee or any other State that they must do that, even though her critics, those who are opposing her